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GENERAL

1. USSR appoints new ambassador to Italy:

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The Soviet Union has asked agreement from Rome for Alexander Bogomolov, its present ambassador to Czechoslovakia, according to the Italian minister in Prague.

The minister expressed concern over the appointment, pointing out that Bogomolov's "deceptively civilized" and "reasonable" approach could have an adverse effect on the delicately balanced political situation in Italy.

Comment: The appointment of a former deputy foreign minister and ambassador to France may foreshadow a more intensified campaign, similar to that directed toward France, to exploit the instability of the Italian government and strengthen resistance to American objectives in Western Europe, particularly strategic trade controls.

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SOVIET UNION

3. Bohlen believes Soviet economic program requires reduced tensions:

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Ambassador Bohlen believes that the Kremlin is so deeply committed to its new internal program that any sharp reversal would create a very serious situation. This program dictates the necessity of avoiding serious international complications and the ambassador therefore feels that the Soviet regime needs and genuinely desires some relaxation in international tension. He points out that the contradiction between this desire and Moscow's reluctance to relinquish any territory can be exploited.

Bohlen points out that the adoption of group rule by Stalin's successors greatly enhances the possibilities of a serious difference of opinion and makes Soviet leadership more vulnerable to public opinion both at home and abroad. He concludes that if the Kremlin can be made to recognize that reduction in tension hinges on major Soviet concessions, the new leadership can be presented with a choice which would be almost certain to provoke dissension and even real division.

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SOUTHEAST ASIA

6. British official considers Burma rice problem serious:

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According to a member of the British Foreign Office just back from Burma, surplus rice stocks there have created

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a serious problem. He believes the peasants may revolt if they are unable to dispose of current crops, which rice millers are reluctant to buy because of inadequate storage facilities and their inability to get credit in the absence of government sales contracts.

The British official believes, however, that Burma could move much of its surplus by lowering its export prices.

Comment: These views are in contrast to an earlier and more optimistic British estimate.

[redacted] Rangoon is drafting strong countermeasures against any Communist exploitation of agrarian unrest. Some government officials are reportedly planning a publicity campaign charging that the United States is responsible for Burma's unsold rice because of its wheat sales to Asian countries.

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WESTERN EUROPE

9. French Foreign Ministry restates position on five-power talks:

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According to the chief of the Far Eastern section at the Quai d'Orsay, French public opinion "would not understand" if Foreign Minister Bidault were unable to agree to a five-power conference because of prior commitments to Britain and the United States. The French official thinks Molotov is likely to insist at Berlin on a more definite answer than the planned tripartite reply, to which France has reluctantly agreed.

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The French think that the West should be prepared to agree to a five-power conference on Asian subjects alone subject to the following conditions: no discussion of Asian questions at Berlin, substantial progress at a prior Korean conference, priority for the Indochina question, and no advance concessions to Communist China.

Comment: Despite public denials, the French government can still be expected to press at Berlin for five-power talks. The above statement is the first indication of conditions which France hopes would be acceptable to the United States and Britain.

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